

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 H-01 INR-05 PM-03 PRS-01

SP-02 IO-06 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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P R 180855Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2540

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T ABIDJAN 2739

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IV, EG

SUBJ: EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS ON HOUPHOUET'S
MIDDLE EAST ACTIVITIES

REF: ABIDJAN 2559

1. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR CHABANA CAME IN TO SEE ME
THIS MORNING TO TALK ABOUT HOUPHOUET'S VIEWS ON THE
ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEMA AND WHAT HAD EMERGED FROM THE
IVORIAN PRESIDENT'S MEETINGS EARLIER THIS YEAR WITH
PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND THE PALESTINIANS. CHABANA
SAID THAT HE HAD NOTED IN THE LOCAL PRESS THAT AMONG
THE SUBJECTS HOUPHOUET HAD DISCUSSED WITH ME ON MARCH
14 WAS THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE THOUGHT IT
MIGHT BE USEFUL TO COMPARE NOTES "ON A PERSONAL BASIS."

2. CHABANA SAID THAT WHILE HOUPHOUET WAS IN GENEVA HE
HAD TELEPHONED CHABANA IN ABIDJAN TO LET HIM KNOW, AS A
COURTESY, THAT HOUPHOUET WOULD BE SUBMITTING TO PRESIDENT
SADAT A REPORT OF THE CONCLUSIONS HE HAD REACHED FROM
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HIS MEETINGS WITH THE ISRAELIS AND THE PALESTINIANS.
THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR HAD JUST RECEIVED BY POUCH A
SUMMARY OF THE REPORT HOUPHOUET HAD CONVEYED TO SADAT.
THE ESSENCE OF HOUPHOUET'S VIEWS SEEM TO BE THAT SINCE
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS HAD TO BE RECOGNIZED IN ANY MID-EAST
SETTLEMENT, AND BECAUSE SOVIET INFLUENCE ON THE PALE-
STINIANS WAS LIKELY TO BE COMMANDING FOR SOME TIME TO

COME, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO ENCOURAGE THE EMERGENCE OF A PALESTINIAN MINI-STATE THAN TO TRY TO INCORPORATE THE PALESTINIANS INTO AN ENLARGED STATE OF JORDAN. ACCORDING TO CHABANA, HOUPHOUET REASONED THAT THE LATTER ARRANGEMENT WOULD EVENTUALLY RESULT IN THE CONTROL OF JORDAN BY THE PALESTINIANS AND THEIR SOVIET MENTORS. THIS PROSPECT LED HOUPHOUET TO BELIEVE THAT SOVIET INFLUENCE COULD MORE EASILY BE CONTAINED IN THE CONTEXT OF A PALESTINIAN MINI-STATE WHOSE POTENTIAL FOR MAKING TROUBLE WOULD BE LIMITED BY ITS SIZE AND RELATIVE WEAKNESS.

3. I TOLD CHABANA THAT THIS WAS A MORE DETAILED EXPRESSION OF HOUPHOUET'S VIEWS ON THE PALESTINIANS THAN HE HAD GIVEN ME BUT WAS NOT REPEAT NOT INCONSISTENT WITH IT. I SAID THAT THE GIST OF HOUPHOUET'S MESSAGE TO ME HAD BEEN THAT HE BELIEVED THE TIME WAS RIPE FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT AND THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN BRINGING IT ABOUT. CHABANA ASKED ME WHETHER HOUPHOUET HAD INDICATED HIS DESIRE OR WILLINGNESS TO PLAY THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY AND I REPLIED THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE IVORIAN PRESIDENT HAD EMPHASIZED TO ME THAT HE WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN OFFERING GOOD OFFICES AND A STATIC-FREE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATIONS TO FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE PARTIES DIRECTLY CONCERNED. CHABANA SEEMED TO BE RELIEVED BY THIS AND SAID THAT HE THOUGHT PERSONALLY THAT HOUPHOUET WAS WISE TO AVOID A MORE AMBITIOUS ROLE SINCE THIS WOULD EXPOSE HIM TO MIS-UNDERSTANDING AND CRITICISM.

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